AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1-38. (canceled).

39. (currently amended) A connection unit for use in a bone fixation device, comprising:

a first end portion and a second end portion;

a spacer interposed between the first and second end portions; and

a longitudinal member located in a longitudinal axial channel of the spacer, wherein the first and second end portions substantially ~~prevent~~ limit motion of the spacer in [[~~the~~]] a longitudinal direction of the longitudinal member, and wherein the connection unit is sized and configured to be completely implanted into a patient and coupled to a bone structure of [[~~a~~]] the patient by at least two securing members.

40. (previously presented) The connection unit of claim 39 wherein said spacer further comprises a male interlocking member and a female interlocking cavity each configured to structurally interlock with a corresponding female interlocking cavity and male interlocking member, respectively, of an adjacent spacer and an adjacent end portion located on opposite sides of the spacer, or two adjacent spacers located on opposite sides of the spacer, or two adjacent end portions located on opposite sides of the spacer.

41. (previously presented) The connection unit of claim 39 wherein said longitudinal member comprises a metal wire comprising a plurality of metal yarns.

42. (previously presented) The connection unit of claim 39 wherein said longitudinal member comprises a braided metal wire structure comprising a plurality of interwoven metal wires.

43. (canceled).

44. (previously presented) The connection unit of claim 39 wherein said spacer comprises a biocompatible metal spacer.

45. (previously presented): The connection unit of claim 39 wherein said spacer comprises a metal-synthetic hybrid spacer.

46. (currently amended) A connection unit, comprising:

a first element configured to be coupled to a first securing member, the first securing member being configured to engage a bone structure of a patient, wherein the first element is a distinct and separate element from the first securing member;

a second element configured to be coupled to a second securing member, the second securing member being configured to engage a bone structure at a different location from the first securing member, wherein the second element is a distinct and separate element from the second securing member;

a ~~center~~ third element located between the first and second elements and having ~~an axial~~ a longitudinal channel therein~~, wherein the first and second elements substantially prevent motion of the center element in a longitudinal direction~~; and

a ~~connecting~~ longitudinal element configured to pass through the ~~axial~~ longitudinal channel of the ~~center~~ third element and configured to be secured to at least one of the first and second elements, wherein the first and second elements substantially limit motion of the third element in a longitudinal direction of the longitudinal element and wherein the connection unit is sized and configured to be completely implanted into the patient.

47. (currently amended): The connection unit of claim 46 wherein the [~~connecting~~] longitudinal element comprises a wire.

48. (currently amended): The connection unit of claim 46 wherein the [~~connecting~~] longitudinal element comprises a braided wire.

49. (currently amended): The connection unit of claim 46 wherein said [~~center~~] third element comprises a biocompatible metal spacer.

50. (currently amended): The connection unit of claim 46 wherein said ~~center~~ third element comprises a metal-synthetic hybrid spacer.

51. (currently amended): The connection unit of claim 46 wherein said ~~center~~ third element comprises a synthetic spacer.

52. (currently amended) A connection unit, comprising:

a first element configured to be coupled to a first securing member, the first securing member being configured to engage a bone structure of a patient, wherein the first element is a distinct and separate element from the first securing member;

a second element configured to be coupled to a second securing member, the second securing member being configured to engage a bone structure at a different location from the first securing member and having an ~~axial~~ longitudinal channel therein, wherein the second element is a distinct and separate element from the second securing member;

a third element located such that the second element is between the first and third elements~~, wherein the first and third elements substantially prevent limit motion of the second element in a longitudinal direction~~; and

a ~~connecting~~ longitudinal element configured to pass through the ~~axial~~ longitudinal channel of the [center] second element and configured to be secured to at least one of the first and third elements, wherein the first and third elements substantially limit motion of the second element in a longitudinal direction of the longitudinal element and wherein the connection unit is sized and configured to be completely implanted into the patient.

53. (currently amended) The connection unit of claim 52 wherein the ~~connecting~~ longitudinal element comprises a wire.

54. (currently amended) The connection unit of claim 52 wherein the ~~connecting~~ longitudinal element comprises a braided wire.

55. (currently amended) The connection unit of claim 52 wherein said ~~center~~ third element comprises a biocompatible metal spacer.

56. (currently amended) The connection unit of claim 52 wherein said ~~center~~ third element comprises a metal-synthetic hybrid spacer.

57. (currently amended) The connection unit of claim 52 wherein said ~~center~~ third element comprises a synthetic spacer.

58. (new) The connection unit of claim 39 wherein the longitudinal member is formed integrally with at least one of the first and second end portions.

59. (new) The connection unit of claim 39 wherein the first and second end portions each have a cross-sectional area that is greater than a cross-sectional area of the longitudinal member such that the first and second end portions substantially limit motion of the spacer in the longitudinal direction.

60. (new) The connection unit of claim 39 wherein the first and second end portions each have a circumference that is greater than a circumference of the longitudinal member such that the first and second end portions substantially limit motion of the spacer in the longitudinal direction.

61. (new) The connection unit of claim 46 wherein the longitudinal element is formed integrally with at least one of the first and second elements.

62. (new) The connection unit of claim 52 wherein the longitudinal element is formed integrally with at least one of the first and third elements.